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## ANIMAL IDIOMS IN GERMAN AND THEIR MACEDONIAN EQUIVALENTS

This paper focuses on the animal idioms in German language and their Macedonian counterparts. We intend to observe whether the German animal idioms have their Macedonian equivalents and the difference in their meaning. We try to make a parallel between the Macedonian and German animal idioms and we hope that this research is needed and can be helpful in order to be accurate when translating German specialized or non-specialized texts into Macedonian and vice versa. We analyzed German idioms such as: *Zwei Fliegen mit einer Klappe schlagen* (‘so eden udar dve muvi tepa’ or ‘so eden kursum dva zajaka ubiva’), *ein Hundeleben führen* (‘vodi kuceski zivot’), *Versuchskaninchen* (‘zamorice’), *die Katze im Sack kaufen* (‘kupuva macka vo vreka’), *mit jmdm. Katz und Maus spielen* (‘igra macka i glusec’ / ‘igra toplo-ladno’), *wie die Katze um den heissen Brei* (‘mnogu zboruva, a nisto ne kazuva’).

*Key words:* animal idioms, contrastive analysis, semantic differences.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Idioms

This paper has the purpose to observe the way in which German animal idioms are represented in the Macedonian language. By that we mean to observe not just whether or not German animal idioms have a Macedonian equivalent, but also how many of these equivalents observe the choice of the animal name instead of just giving a semantic equivalent.

An “idiom” is a word or phrase which means something different from what it says - it is usually a metaphor. Idioms are common phrases or terms whose meanings are not literal, but are figurative and only known through their common uses. Because idioms can mean something different from what the words, it is difficult

for someone not very fluent in the language to use them properly. Some idioms are only used by some groups of people or at certain times.

An idiom is an accepted phrase or expression that doesn't follow the usual patterns of the language or that has a meaning other than the literal. Phrases that, when dissected, don't seem to make much sense, are often idiomatic.

The German language is rich in idioms and you may have trouble understanding the language if you do not know its idiomatic expressions. Idioms are peculiar combinations of words that allow you to convey a specific message. Most of the times, if you do not know an idiom and just look at the words that make it up, you will be confused. Yet, the words have a very clear meaning exactly because they are put together in that bizarre way. That is the uniqueness and greatness of idioms. If you learn German idioms, you will master some of the most suggestive phrases of the German language and will be able to express yourself in the same way a German native speaker does.

You could consider a language as being completely made up of idioms. Each language has a certain set of rules that govern the way words are put together to express facts, ideas, and feelings. The rules and their exceptions are unique to the language, despite possible similarities with other languages. In this sense, a language is always idiomatic. Within this general consideration, we usually think of 'idioms' as unique phrases: we use them to express something that other, more general sentences cannot express just as well. It is important to learn idioms to be able to communicate well. They are also interesting to study because of the insight they give us into the language and the people who use them. These expressions originate in the history, literature, religion, and traditions typical of a certain community. For this reason, idioms reveal much of the way of thinking of a community.

In most languages, we cannot fully express ourselves or understand others if we do not know the most common idioms. It is possible to speak German without using specific idioms, of course, but then our German would be incomplete, like a painting where some colors have been taken away. Idioms spice up the German language and give it the most vibrant colors. German idioms are very widely used in all social circles and circumstances: idiomatic expressions are used in conversation as well as in media and literature. Therefore, learning German idioms will enhance your language skills. A good command of German idioms will make your mastery of the German language complete. Even if you know the meaning of each word, you may not understand the idiom itself. If you translate 'Hals über Kopf' (neck over head) word by word, you could hardly guess that the expression actually means '*in a mad hurry*.'

## 2. CORPUS ANALYSIS

### 2.1. Materials and method

We have investigated fifty five German idioms containing names of animals, birds and insects gathered from German language and specialized dictionaries. First we have introduced the terms idiom and equivalency, then we have looked for the Macedonian counterparts of the German idioms analyzing their equivalency and frequency.

### 2.2. Results

The image created by the literal meaning of an idiom can be used very effectively to help you remember that idiom. Here are just two examples of German idioms that can be easily retained thinking of the images they evoke. The English idiom *'to make a mountain out of a molehill'* is *'aus einer Mücke einen Elefanten machen'* (to make an elephant out of a mosquito) in German, or in Macedonian *'od muva pravi slon'*. To remember the German idiom, you can easily picture a tiny mosquito changing into a big elephant. The English *'as fit as a fiddle'* becomes *'gesund wie ein Fisch im Wasser'* (as healthy as a fish in the water) in German, but in Macedonian *"zdrav kako dren"*. To memorize this German phrase, you can think of a healthy fish swimming in clear waters.

Even though using the images of the literal translation is an effective and fun way to learn German idioms, the literal translation alone is deceiving. The real meaning of the German idiom has to be learned in context to be correctly understood. It is necessary to study idioms within sentences. A proper example makes the meaning and the use clear. The German idiom *'für die Katz sein'* literally means *'to be for the cat,'* but the English equivalent is *'to be a waste of time'* (*'dengubi'*, *'bezdelnici'* in Macedonian). Here's an example: *'Dr. Schmitts Forschungsarbeit ist leider für die Katz. Dr. Frankenstein hat dieselbe Maschine schon vor drei Jahren konstruiert. = Unfortunately, Dr. Schmitt's research is a waste of time. Dr. Frankenstein has already designed the same machine.'* You may initially be tempted to think that Dr. Schmitt literally gives his research to the cat, but the real meaning of the expression becomes apparent when put into context.

The idioms we have analyzed include animal, bird and insect idioms. The animals' characteristic physical or behavioral features are put to display in the following:

**Affe** (ape) > *ich glaube, mich laust der Affe* (well, I'll be damned / 'proklet da sum').

**Bär** (bear) > jemandem einen Bären aufbinden. To put something over on someone, to fool someone (tie a bear on someone) 'pravi od nekogo majmun/budala'.

**Bär** (bear) > Man soll das Fell des Bären nicht verteilen, bevor man ihn erlegt hat. Don't count your chickens before they're hatched. (Don't divide up the bear skin before you've killed the bear). In Macedonian: 'prvo skokni, pa reci op'.

**Bär** (bear) > stark wie ein Bär. Strong as an ox (bear), 'jak kako vol/konj/bik' in Macedonian.

**Bär** (bear) > Wer Bären fangen will, muss sich mit Honig versehen. You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar. (To catch bears you need honey.), 'frli ripce, fati krapce'. Variation: "Mit Speck fängt man Mäuse." (You catch mice with bacon).

Einem geschenkten **Gaul** schaut man nicht ins Maul. Don't look a gift horse in the mouth. ('na poklonet/arizan konj ne gi gledaj zabite').

einen **Vogel** haben. To be nuts/crazy. (to have a bird [in the head], 'ima bubacki vo glavata') Hast du einen Vogel? Are you nuts/crazy? Similar: "Bei dir piept's wohl!" (You've got to be kidding! You're not making any sense. - *Lit.* "you're making peeping noises").

Eine **Schwalbe** macht noch keinen Sommer. One swallow does not make a summer, 'edna lastovica ne pravi prolet'. Once doesn't count. One swallow doesn't make a spring. Variations: "Eine einzige Nuss rappelt nicht im Sacke." (A single nut doesn't rattle in the sack.) - "Einmal ist keinmal" ("Once is Never").

**Elefant** (elephant) > aus einer Mücke einen Elefanten machen (make a mountain out of a molehill), 'od muva pravi slon'.

**Esel** – Man kann aus einem Esel kein **Rennpferd** machen (you can put lipstick on a pig, it's still a pig). ('od sekoe drvo ne biva svirce').

**Eulen** nach Athen tragen (to take coals to Newcastle, sell refrigerators to Eskimos) /'ribata ja ucis da pliva'/. Variation: "Wasser in den Rhein bringen" (to put water in the Rhine).

**Fisch** (fish) > Der **Fisch** stinkt vom Kopf her.

The problems start at the top. (Fish starts stinking from the head.) in Macedonian: 'ribata smrdi od glavata'.

Sich wie ein **Fisch** auf dem Trockenem fühlen (to feel like a fish out of water/, 'kako riba na suvo').

Gesund wie ein **Fisch** im Wasser (fit as fiddle) - ,zdrav kako dren'.

Dicker **Fisch** (,big fish/'prva violina').

**Fisch** (fish) > nicht **Fisch**, nicht Fleisch / weder **Fisch** noch Fleisch neither fish nor fowl; nothing definite or recognizable (neither fish nor meat) in Macedonian: 'ni voda ni kiselina' or 'ni riba - ni devojka'.

**Fliege** (fly) > zwei **Fliegen** mit einer Klappe schlagen/ in Macedonian 'so eden udar dve muvi tepa'; to kill two birds with one stone (hit two flies with one swatter).

**Fliege** (fly) > zwei **Fliegen** mit einem Schlag treffen / in Macedonian 'so eden kursum dva zajaka ubiva'); to kill two birds with one stone (hit two flies with one blow).

**Fliege** (fly) > Sie fielen um/starben wie die **Fliegen**. They dropped/died like flies. (in Macedonian: 'padnaa kako krusi').

**Fuchs** (fox) > wo sich Hase und Fuchs gute Nacht sagen. Out in the middle of nowhere, in the back of beyond (where hare and fox say good night). (,Na kraj na svetot' or ,kade Gospod rekol zbogum').

**Der Fuchs** ändert das Haar, und bleibt was er war (,volkot go menuva krznoto, no karakterot ne').

**Frosch** > sei kein Frosch (go on!) ,ne bidi kukavica', 'rasipuvac na zabavi/plaslivko, straslivko'.

**Hahn** im Korb sein / der **Hahn** im Korb sein – to be the cock of the walk; be one who dominates a group /situation, esp. overbearingly; a man surrounded by women 'se cuvstvuvaa (zivee) kako bubreg vo loj' or 'glaven milenik e'.

**Hahn** > Danach kräht kein Hahn mehr. No one gives a hoot about that anymore. (no rooster crows about that /'nikoj ne go zabelezuva/recka ne mu udara/ne go ferma').

**Da liegt der Hase im Pfeffer** (that's the snag, that's the rub, that's the fly on the ointment), in Macedonian: 'toa e problemot'; 'edno ama na devojkata i ja rasipuvaa srekata' or 'edno no pravi problem'.

**Hase** - Main Name ist Hase (I don't have a clue/'jas ne sum od tuka').

Sehen, wie der **Hase** läuft (to see how the wind blows, 'od kade duva veterot').

**Hund** (dog) > bekannt wie ein bunter Hund. Well known, known all over (,like a colorful dog“) in Macedonian: 'nadaleku poznat'.

**Hund** (dog) > Bellende Hunde beißen nicht. Barking dogs don't bite. 'kuce sto lae ne kasa'/'od onoj sto zboruva ne se plasi').

**Hund** (dog): Da liegt der Hund begraben. That's the crux/heart of the matter. (in Macedonian: 'tuka lezi zajakot'). The expression really has nothing to do with dogs. It goes back to an old German word for „treasure“: *die Hunde*. So the phrase actually means “that's where the treasure's buried.”

**Hund** (dog) > vor die Hunde gehen. To go to the dogs; go to rack and ruin ('propaga', 'doaga do prosjacki stap').

**Kater** > einen Kater haben. To have a hangover (,mamuren').

**Katze** (cat) > Das ist alles für die Katz. That's for the birds. („for the cat“) ('zaludno e', 'bezpolezno e')

Wenn die **Katze** aus dem Haus ist, tanzen die Mäuse (When the cat's away, the mice do play, 'koga mackata ne e doma, gluvcite oro vodat ').

**Katze** aus dem Sack lassen (to let the cat out of the bag), 'izdal tajna' or ,kasnal noga od kokoska'.

die **Katze** im Sack kaufen / to buy a pig in a poke (,kupuva macka vo vreka').

**Katzensprung** (cat's jump) > ein Katzensprung. A stone's throw ('mnogu blisku/ nema ni dva cekora do.../pred nosot ti e').

Wie die **Katze** um den heissen Brei schleichen (,mnogu zboruva, a nisto ne kazuva').

**Kuh** (cow) > Ich bin keine **Kuh**, die man melken kann. I'm not made of money. („not a cow to be milked“), /'ne sum krava za molzenje'.

**Kuh** (cow) > wie die **Kuh** vorm neuen Tor/vorm Berg dastehen. To be completely baffled („like a cow standing in front of a new gate/the mountain“), /'gleda kako tele vo sarena vrata'.

**Kuhhaut** (cowhide) > Das geht auf keine Kuhhaut. That's absolutely incredible/staggering. („doesn't go onto a cowhide“), 'toa ne e plukni-zalepi'.

**Maus** (mice) > weisse Mäuse sehen – to see pink elephants ('promasena investicija').

Er hat Mäuse im Kopfe (,ima bubacki vo glavata').

Da beisst die Maus keinen Faden ab. It's Lombard street to a China orange. ('dededeset i devet posto' / 'sto posto').

**Pferd** (horse) > Das hält ja kein **Pferd** aus. That's more than flesh and blood can stand. („Not even a horse can endure that.“), 'toa ne moze ni konj da go izdrzi'.

**Pferd** > das **Pferd** beim / vom Schwanz aufzäumen. To put the cart before the horse („to bridle the horse by the tail“, 'pred da sies, treba da krois', 'prvo posej, posle znej', 'ne se leta duri ne porasnat krilja').

Aufs falsche **Pferd** setzen - to back the wrong horse ('nasol crkva kaj da se moli').

**Arbeitspferd** (workhorse), 'raboti kako konj' or ,raboti kako crnec'.

**Versuchskaninchen** (guinea pig, zamorce).

**Vogel**: einen **Vogel** haben (to be nuts/crazy; in Macedonian: ima bubacki vo glavata).

**Pechvogel** ("pitch bird") unlucky devil; ('baksuz').

**Wolf** > Wer sich zum Schlaf macht, den fressen die Wölfe. (He that makes himself a sheep, shall be eaten by the **wolf**), 'ako si ovca sekoj ke te strizi'.

**Wolf** im Schlafpelz (a **wolf** in sheep's clothing) 'jagne vo volcja koza' or 'koj ne go znae, skapo ke go plati'.

Sich einen **Wolf** schreiben müssen (you don't have to write endless, volumes, 'ne mora da se napise roman' / 'da se rasplini').

While trying to find Macedonian equivalents for the above explained idioms, the research was carried into effect to the extent that most of the idioms entail an equivalent. However, there are some instances in which they do not possess one. We refer hereby to the cultural differences between German and Macedonian societies, instances where one cannot find equivalents because of the lack of similarities. Here we can mention: sich eine Wolf schreiben müssen (you don't have to write endless, volumes / ne mora tolku mnogu da se pisuva, da pisuva celi romani / da se rasplinuva); der Hahn im Korb sein (kako bubreg vo loj); wo sich Hase und Fuchs gute Nacht sagen / (na kraj na svetot, kade Gospod rekol zbogum).

If we examine the Macedonian animal idioms we can see, as previously stated, such idioms in which the same animal as in the German one occurs, and such that contain another animal name (instances based on the cultural differences already mentioned). The following pertain to idioms exhibiting (almost) the same animal: wie Sardinen in der Büsche (kako ribi / kako sardini vo konzerva); ein Hundeleben führen (zivee kako kuce/vodi kuceski zivot), Krokidilentränen (krokodilski solzi), Katz und Maus spielen (igra macka I glusec; igra so nekogo toplo-ladno). As for idioms containing other names of animals, or containing no animal, we have: zwei Fliegen mit einer Klappe schlagen (so eden kursum dva zajaka ubiva (dve muvi tepa), Gänsehaut bekommen (mu se naezi kozata), Froschperspektive (ogranicen pogled), die Katze aus dem Sack lassen (kasnal noga od kokoska/izdal tajna), der frühe Vogel fängt den Wurm (the early bird catches the worm/koj rano rani, dve sreki grabi or koj prevari, toj tovari or rano pile, rano pee); Vogel frisst oder stirbt (it's sink or swim) /ili trgni se, ili pokloni se or plivaj ili udavi se/ der Schwanz wedelt mit dem Hund (to wag the dog) 'nekomu skrenuva vnimanie', sei kein Frosch – 'ne bidi kukavica, plaslivec, straslivec, rasipuvac na zabavi', wie die Katze um den heißen Brei schleichen (mnogu zboruva, a nisto ne kazuva).

### 3. RESULT ANALYSIS

#### 3.1. Discussion

The previous section brought forth an account of German animal idioms and their Macedonian counterparts. We have seen that most German idioms entail an

equivalent, but a number of idioms still remain which bear no representation in the Macedonian language, a fact induced by cultural differences. These cultural differences also determine a shift in the use of animal names within the two languages resulting in dynamic equivalents.

Deepening our investigation we find that, from 54 Macedonian counterparts, 25 (46%) do not exhibit animal names, though issuing the same meaning. Interesting enough, from the remaining Macedonian animal equivalents, 14 (25%) observe the German choice of the animal, while the other 15 (27%) take a different animal name. For a clear perspective see figure 1.

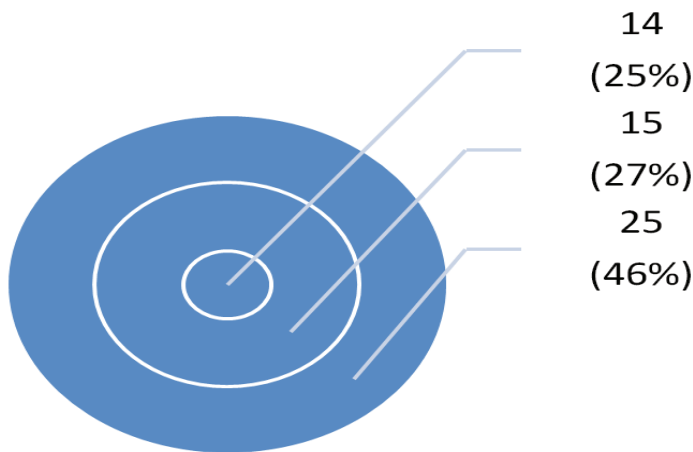


Figure 1: Macedonian counterparts of German animal idioms (25% observe the German choice of the animal; 27% take a different animal name; 46% do not exhibit animal names).

### **3.2. Conclusions**

There is no perfect equivalency between German and Macedonian idioms. We have proven this for a fact in the above sections. We could infer this from the analysis of the 54 German animal idioms presented, of which 14 displayed Macedonian counterparts (25%) of the idioms and actually respects the choice of the German animal name and preserve it within Macedonian language.

Another conclusion that can be drawn is that one of the determiners of this “imperfect” equivalency is the cultural difference between the German and the Macedonian society, conferring different roles to the same animal. What we could clearly see was that some idioms, such as those with “cat” and “fish“, had an almost perfect word-for-word translation in Macedonian.



We do believe that this kind of research is needed and can be very helpful in order to be as accurate as possible when translating German specialized or non-specialized texts into Macedonian and vice versa. Our intention is to continue our research enlarging our scope beyond the animal world.

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## IDIOMES ALLEMANDS CONTENANT LES NOMS D'ANIMAUX ET LEUR ÉQUIVALENTS MACÉDONIENS

### Résumé

Notre recherche a clairement montré que bien que la plupart des idiomes allemands contenant le nom d'un animal impliquent un équivalent macédonien du point de vue de sémantique, ces contreparties ne prennent pas toujours le nom d'animal. Les noms d'animaux peuvent être remplacés par les noms concrets aussi bien qu'abstraites. Si nous examinons les idiomes allemands nous pouvons voir qu'il y a des cas où le même animal se trouve dans les idiomes des deux langues examinées, mais aussi que les noms d'animaux peuvent différencier, ce qui est dû aux différences culturelles.

Nous avons analysé des idiomes allemands tels que : *Zwei Fliegen mit einer Klappe schlagen* ('so eden udar dve muvi tepa' or ,so eden kursum dva zajaka ubiva'), *ein Hundeleben führen* ('vodi kuceski zivot'), *Versuchskaninchen* ('zamorice'), *die Katze im Sack kaufen* ('kupuva macka vo vreka'), *mit jmdm. Katz und Maus spielen* ('igra macka i glu-

*sec' / 'igra toplo-ladno'), wie die Katze um den heissen Brei (,mnogu zboruva, a nisto ne kazuva').*

*Mots clés:* idiomes, animaux, analyse contrastive, différences sémantiques.

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